

BBC STYLE GUIDE KEY POINTS

1. Self-identity should be removed from the BBC style guide on the grounds of accuracy, impartiality and staying within UK law.
2. The term **transgender-identified male or female** or **a man or woman who identifies as transgender** to be adopted in style guide to ensure clarity and consistency (transgender person or transgender male/female would be a possible alternative).
3. Sex and gender to be accurately defined.
4. Guidance to be included to avoid perpetuating myths on suicides, puberty blockers and crimes against transgender people. Beware of fake news promoted by lobbyists.

CURRENT BBC STYLE GUIDE

Gender/sex

Using appropriate language is an important part of how we portray people in our stories. Sexuality, race or disability should not be mentioned unless they are relevant to the subject matter. But when we do focus on one aspect of a person's character, we should be careful we do not define them by it.

Use gay as an adjective, rather than a noun (e.g., two gay men – but not 'two gays'). It can apply to members of both sexes, but current preferred practice is to refer to 'gay men and lesbians'. For wider references, talk about LGBT people, or the LGBT community (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender).

Homosexual means people of either sex who are attracted to people of their own gender, but take care how you use it. While it can be fine in historical or judicial references, it can be considered offensive in other context due to past associations with illegal behaviour and mental illness.

Transgender, or trans, is a good umbrella term. A person born male would be described as a transgender woman and vice-versa. Use the appropriate pronoun – "she" or "he". If reporting on someone who is making their transition public, it may be appropriate to refer to their previous identity. However, in other contexts, we would generally refer to a trans person by their current identity only.

Transsexual refers to someone who has changed, or wishes to change, their body through medical intervention. Do not say 'transsexuals' in the same way we would not say 'gays' or 'blacks'.

Take care with the term 'sex change', unless referring specifically to the surgical element of a transition. It should not be used as a general description for a transgender person. If in any doubt, ask the person involved how they would like to be described.

STYLE GUIDE CORRECTIONS

The style guide confuses sex (male/female) with gender (masculine/feminine) notably in the entry on homosexuality. We should define each:

Sex: a person's biological sex, either male or female. A woman is an adult female, a man is an adult male.

Gender: a social construct, denoting masculine or feminine behaviour, which an individual may or may not choose to adopt.

Homosexual means people of either sex who are attracted to people of their own sex. **A person born male would be described as a transgender woman and vice versa**

This goes beyond the law (and objective reality). It risks seriously confusing and alienating our audience. Our audience is highly likely to understand 'transgender woman' as a woman who has chosen to live her life as a transgender person, rather than a man who chooses to live as a woman.

A much more accurate term would be **transgender-identified male or female** or a **man/woman who identifies as transgender**.

Furthermore we are consistently breaking our own advice and wrongly describing 'transgender women' simply as 'women'. An example is our recent reporting on the trial of beautician Paris Valeta Bregazzi: 'Woman spared jail after pushing man on tube track'. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-43127415>

Transgender We must flag up some key areas where journalists need to exercise caution – including on inflated suicide statistics for transgender young people, which break Samaritans reporting guidelines, non-existent statistic on rates of crime against transgender people and unsubstantiated claims on the safety of puberty blockers and hormones. Please see below the section on sex changes and our myth buster handout.

'In other contexts, we would generally refer to a trans person by their current identity.' Our job is to report the truth accurately without fear or favour. In sex crime cases, the identity, including the sex, of the defendant and the sex of the victim are always relevant. We have a public service duty not to collude in the obscuring of the identities of those accused of sexual offences.

Take care with the term 'sex change'. An individual cannot change their biological sex, although they can have cosmetic surgery to their genitalia and receive hormone therapy to allow them to feel more comfortable in their chosen gender. Bear in mind that 85-90% of men who identify as transgender choose to keep their genitalia. (Source: Sex and Gender Ethics Society).

'If in doubt ask the person involved how they would like to be identified' – This is reckless advice for BBC journalists and has no basis in UK law. The BBC has a commitment to report the truth. Self-identification of sex/gender (or other characteristics like age, disability, nationality) does not exist in the UK. Under the Gender Recognition Act 2004, a gender recognition certificate is given on behalf of an expert panel, after someone has lived for at least two years in their chosen gender. Without a gender recognition certificate, your legal sex is that on your birth certificate.

Our audience trusts us to report objectively, not to parrot the language of extreme pressure groups, especially on such a divisive issue.